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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: SAVA RIVER BASIN INITIATIVE

REF: SECSTATE 90991

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1. (U) This cable responds to reftel request for information on the status of Slovenia's commitment to the establishment of a Permanent Sava River Basin Commission, the implementation of its mandate, and official representation. On 05 May, MFA State Undersecretary and Stability Pact National Coordinator Janez Premoze discussed reftel questions with Econoff. Information below is keyed to questions posed in reftel.

2. (SBU) Does the GoS remain committed to working with the three neighboring Sava riparian states to establish a Permanent Sava River Basin Commission? According to Premoze, the answer is an unequivocal "yes." The GoS will continue to move the process forward, setting the stage for the Commission to start as soon as possible. He remarked that Slovenia has great interest in establishing the Commission because it is a "forward looking project for all of the countries" involved. Although the Sava River is not navigable in Slovenia, Premoze pointed out that "what happens downstream is important to us." He mentioned that Slovenia sees the Commission serving various purposes; a sort of "bypass used to resolve a number of outstanding issues in a multilateral forum." Premoze reported that Slovenian companies are eager to participate in reconstruction projects, hoping to win some of the tenders issued for that purpose and floated the idea of the possible construction of a hydroelectric power plant on the Sava.

3. (SBU) Does your government support Zagreb as the location of the permanent Secretariat? Will your government confirm its support via diplomatic note? Premoze confirmed that Slovenia will support Zagreb as the location of the permanent Secretariat as long as the other three countries stand by their April 2004 commitments. Premoze stated that the four countries agreed, in principle, that the Secretariat's location would be in Zagreb; that the Commissioner would be someone from Serbia and Montenegro; the Chairperson would come from Bosnia; and that the agreement's depository would be in Slovenia. He hoped that the four countries will have ratified the International Agreement before the upcoming Stability Pact Meeting scheduled to take place 06-08 June in Portoroz, Slovenia.

4. (SBU) Who are the competent MFA authorities charged with overseeing the Sava River Basin Initiative? Which line ministry has authority over this issue? Who is the appropriate working-level contact? Premoze explained that the MFA (his Office) will take the lead in establishing an Interministerial Working Group responsible for issues dealing with the Sava River Initiative [NOTE: The line ministry holding the chairmanship is undetermined. END NOTE]. He observed that in addition to the MFA, the Ministry of the Economy, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Transport will also be represented in this Interministerial Working Group. Premoze added that the "overall authority on the administration of the Sava River Basin Initiative will rest with the Cabinet."

5. (SBU) Who can vest your country's delegation with the authority to participate in the Interim Commission meetings and make commitments? Citing his previous responses, Premoze explained that the Cabinet will take a final decision based on the Interministerial Working Group recommendations. "The issues will determine which line ministry will be in charge of staffing meetings," Premoze said.

6. (SBU) What resources is your government willing to dedicate to the establishment of/participation in the Interim and Permanent Commissions? Premoze noted that a legal experts group will draft a Administrative

Agreement dealing specifically with operational costs. In his view, each country will contribute one-fourth of the costs associated with running the Secretariat, and provide one-fourth of the total. Unequivocally, he noted that Slovenia remains "fully committed to the agreement."

17. (SBU) Do the projects listed below submitted by the four member states still represent your government's priorities? Although reluctant to answer this question, Premoze identified item 11 as the GoS's highest priority. [NOTE: Item 11 is listed as "Implementation of WFD -- Testing Guidance. END NOTE.] He commented that the rest of the projects would have to be considered specifically.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: Premoze seemed genuinely upbeat and hopeful that a Permanent Commission will be operational by the end of the year. In his view, this initiative lends credibility to the Stability Pact as a means to find solutions to common concerns. Premoze's assessment on the feasibility and sustainability of this initiative is influenced by his role in the Stability Pact, as chair of one of pact's working tables. Beyond his personal role, however, Premoze's statements illustrate a binding thread in Slovenia's overall security policy - the use of economic means and business opportunities to promote regional stability and national security in a multilateral forum. And, the fact that the agreement protects the environment bodes well in an environmentally conscious country. END COMMENT.
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